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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the pressing need for child care centers as a growing number of young married mothers who have preschool age children have begun to enter the workforce. The report recommends child care education at the community or junior college level as a possible career path. Topics covered include: (1) the range of child care programs; (2) trends of teacher training at the junior college level; (3) principles involved and techniques used in working with young children; (4) career options available for junior college graduates; (5) job satisfaction of junior college graduates; and (6) the advantages of choosing a career in child care. (RJC)

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Child Care Training in Community and Junior Colleges

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Due to rapid changes in the economy and growing economic necessity, women have been encouraged to break their traditional roles and enter the labor force. A recent survey that asked women why they worked, found that only 14 percent of the women indicated that they work because they wanted to have something interesting to do. Forty-three percent of the women surveyed indicated that they worked to bring in extra family income; 27 percent of them were supporting themselves; and 19 percent of them were supporting their families (Roper Organization: 1980).

Mothers are more like to work today than ever before. More young married mothers who have preschool age children have begun to enter the work force. In 1960, about 18.6 percent of mothers with children under 6 years of age were employed; by 1970, working mothers with young children had increased to 30.3%; by 1980, the proportion of working mothers was 45.2%; and by 1984, it reached 51.8% (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1984). Today, the majority of working women are married; over two-thirds of them have child-rearing responsibilities in addition to their jobs. What do these statistics mean? It means that there are millions of preschool children who need day care while their mothers are working.

Working parents need day care for their young children. In 1958, 57% of the young children whose mothers worked outside of the home were cared for in their own homes, and group care services were used little (about 5%). By 1977, a remarkable change had occurred: 29% of preschool children were cared for in their own homes, while 47% were cared for in another person's home. In 1977, there were

approximately 18,300 day care centers in the United States with a total enrollment of almost 900,000 children and 126,000 children for after-school care. According to the National Day Care Home Study released in 1981, there were approximately 115,000 regulated family day care homes in the United States, of which 85,000 are independent homes not affiliated with any sponsoring agency (Child Welfare League of America, 1984:2).

The pressing needs for day care and the awareness of early childhood education have produced many alternatives of child care programs for parents to choose. The wide range of child care programs include those whose primary purpose is child development, education and recreation, such as Head Start, children's learning centers, nursery schools, public school preschool programs, extended day programs, park & recreation sponsored summer programs, etc. They also include non-profit day care programs sponsored by churches and hospitals, profit day-care centers sponsored by proprietary corporations, employer-related child care programs sponsored by industries and/or labor unions, independent family day care homes, and nanny services (Child Welfare League of America, 1984).

Accompanied by the increased demands for flexibility in alternatives of child care, the new patterns of teacher training have surfaced. Many community and junior colleges have offered training in early childhood education so that their graduates may qualify for jobs as teachers in a wide variety of preschool programs. Area vocational schools, Child Development Associate (CDA) programs and many schools

have attempted to provide some training for people who work with young children.

Community and junior college child care programs teach principles and techniques in working with young children. With two-year post-secondary education, students will develop many valuable skills in working with young children. These skills are establishing visitation routines, implementing activities, building effective interpersonal communication skills, providing a safe environment, improving classroom management skills, constructing newsletters and bulletins, preventing accidents, preparing nutritional snacks, practicing proper discipline techniques, and managing resources.

Community and junior college child care programs provide in-depth training in child growth and development, preschool program planning, day care administration, and hands-on experiences. They train paraprofessionals in the field of early childhood education. The placement for junior college child care graduates has been great. Junior college graduates are qualified as day care center assistant teachers with no previous work experience, or as head teachers with one year cumulated work experience. They are also qualified as nursery school teachers, head start program teachers, public school teaching aides in preschool programs or kindergarten classrooms, after-school-care providers, and of course, family day care providers. With additional training, they can be administrators, library storytellers, children's book or toy salespersons, camp counselors, special needs program teachers (working with handicapped children), and parent educators.

The key element in any child care program is the quality of people who are responsible for the program operations and child care. Junior college child care graduates have received a sound basic knowledge of child growth and development, and ways to promote young children's learning at each level. Junior college child care graduates are usually more committed to the field of child care.

In regards to job satisfaction, most junior college graduates are satisfied with the working conditions in child care services. Many positive comments have been made by the day care center directors in favor of two-year degree child care workers in comparison with a four-year degree child care worker. People with four-year degrees are not satisfied with the pay and status in child care services. Their turnover rate was higher in comparison with the people who have a two-year degree.

There are many advantages to choosing a career in child care services. The most rewarding one is the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that comes from watching, teaching, supporting, and enhancing children's growth and development. People who work with young children know that they <u>can</u> and <u>do</u> make a difference; that can bring the greatest personal reward. Community and junior colleges are the ideal place to train child care paraprofessionals. They have qualified staff and facilities. They can provide sound knowledge as well as hands-on experience. With the projection of 75% of the mothers in American families working, more junior colleges should offer child care programs to train the qualified child care workers entering the rapidly growing industry.

CONCLUSION

With the dramatic increase in the number of women participating in the labor force, there is a pressing need for child care. Community and junior colleges can provide quality training for child care personnel. The outlook in the future is very positive.

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